

# Secret Societies

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Throughout the history of the [world](#), numerous organizations have emerged that may be classified as **secret societies**. Although their objectives have varied considerably —ranging from spiritual and magical pursuits to political or elitist ambitions— these groups share a set of common structural and functional characteristics. First and foremost, they tend to exhibit a markedly exclusive nature, which may manifest either through legitimate initiatory criteria or through dynamics akin to sectarian structures.

Likewise, many of these societies claim to possess esoteric or hidden knowledge, granting them a position of privilege in contrast to the general population. Another defining feature is their consistent tendency to favor their own members, whether through protection networks, social advancement, or preferential access to resources, secrets, or knowledge. Ultimately, all of these organizations—including those of a predominantly religious nature— operate according to a deliberate agenda, which may unfold in the short, medium, or long term, and is typically oriented toward either philosophical-spiritual goals or the consolidation of power and influence among their members.

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## History of the Secret Societies

The existence of secret societies can be traced back to time immemorial in the world. Even non-human civilizations, such as the reptiloids vran, displayed analogous organizational structures. One notable example is the so-called "caste" known as the Operators—a restricted group of individuals endowed with powerful magical abilities within a species generally devoid of magical affinity. Similarly, among [elves](#)—through their sages—as well as among [gnomes](#) and [dwarves](#) via guilds tasked with safeguarding specific technical knowledge, one finds organizational forms that could be considered proto-secret societies.

What sets humans apart in this phenomenon is the emergence of groups with a more pronounced philosophical-religious dimension. Many of these adopted sectarian traits and were forced to operate clandestinely, both to preserve their rituals and to avoid persecution or extermination. A paradigmatic example is the [Coram Agh Tera](#), also known as the *Cult of the Lion-Headed Spider*, which operated in the shadows for over a century before its devotional practices could be performed more or less openly.

In the Northern Kingdoms, such organizations did not begin to proliferate significantly until well into the 13th century. Although the Coram Agh Tera was founded in 1161 in the back then Nordling country of Geso—a territory later annexed by the Nilfgaardian Empire—it is considered more of a precursor than a direct part of the subsequent wave. A similar case is the Unification of Sadat, a secret society of mages founded in the late 1080s, which may be interpreted as a conceptual predecessor to the later Lodge of Sorceresses.

From the year 1229 onward, multiple sects turned them, secret societies began to emerge across the northernmost regions of the Northern Kingdoms. Many of them were characterized by the worship of monsters to which divine or transcendent qualities were attributed. A notable exception being the Lodge of Sorceresses, who stood out for its unique focus on political strategy and institutional power, as opposed to the esoteric or devotional tendencies found in most other contemporary organizations.

In Nilfgaard (and probably in the [Far South](#) and the [Far East](#) as well), the

phenomenon follows a distinct chronology. Records of secret societies predate even the founding of the Empire itself, suggesting a much older and likely more institutionalized tradition of such structures in other parts of the world.

## Typology of Secret Societies

Secret societies can be classified according to their primary purpose and nature into six broad categories:

### Examples of Guild-Based or Political Secret Societies

- **Unification of Sadat:** Founded in the 1080s as a splinter group from the Brotherhood of Sorcerers, this society sought to establish a new magical order that prioritized the well-being of the common people over the power struggles of the elite.
- **Lodge of Sorceresses:** Conceived as a response to the Brotherhood's collapse, the Lodge aimed to create a new political regime with the ultimate goal of founding a state ruled by magic.
- **Order of the Sages of the Quill:** A male-only organization founded in reaction to the Lodge's public existence around 1271. It pursued similar objectives but barred female membership, claiming that women were too emotional to manage magical matters—a mirror image of the Lodge's argument regarding male incompetence. Unlike the Lodge, which suffered persecution and partial extermination in the 1270s, the Order declined peacefully and was eventually absorbed into the true successor of the Brotherhood of Sorcerers, the Society of Magic during the 1280s.

### Examples of Religious Secret Societies

- **Coram Agh Tera:** A cult established in Geso in 1161, centered on the worship of a cruel spider-like deity. Operated clandestinely for over a century before achieving limited legitimacy in different parts of the world.

### Example of Criminal Secret Societies

- **Gardunnia:** A secret society and criminal organization that succeeded in unifying criminal leaders (and, indirectly, the underworld organizations they controlled) across both the Northern Kingdoms and Nilfgaard, particularly

following the fall of the Big Four of **Novigrad** and the Syndicate. It functioned as a far-reaching mafia-like structure, governed by strict codes and a rigid hierarchy.

## Example of Scientific Secret Societies

- **Salamandra**: Although not strictly a secret society in its structure —given its function as a criminal organization— *Salamandra* shares several defining features of one. Its ultimate purpose, under the secret leadership of Jacques de Aldersberg, was to create a superior human race by using mutagenic formulas stolen from Kaer Morhen. The group engaged in large-scale experimentation, alchemical research, and the forced application of mutations, often with devastating results.
- **Pro-Mutation Circle**: A lesser-known secret society focused on the theoretical and practical application of **witcher** mutations beyond their original purpose. Drawing from the work of Alzur, Cosimo Malaspina, and Idarran of Ulivo, as well as their successors, the Circle aimed to explore the limits of controlled mutagenesis. The sorceress Keira Metz is known to have been involved with the group. Her membership, along with external support and years of study, enabled her to develop a cure for the Catriona Plague, putting to an end years of outbreaks and deaths.

## Examples of Philo-Religious Secret Societies

- **Eternal Eclipse** (also known as the Nefandi): An esoteric society devoted to the worship, study, and subjugation of demonic entities and other extraplanar beings. Its members believed that worshiping, deceiving, and ultimately subjugating such entities to extract power from them would propel humanity into a new evolutionary phase —elevating it to the status of gods. Their doctrine blended dark magic with radical, anthropocentric messianism.

## Notes

- Feel free to put your name in the writer tag and expand the article if you wish so.

## Trivia

- The mention of sects that worship monsters is a direct reference to The Witcher's latest canonical book, the prequel focused in teen/young adult Geralt of Rivia, *Crossroads of Ravens*, where Mother Assumpta of Rivia —the predecessor of Nenneke— remarks about such cultists mocking and attacking the priestesses of Melitele.



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